



Bitterroot National Forest

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Patrolling and A Quick Response are Key to Today's Firefighting Efforts

HAMILTON, MT; JULY 25, 2007. --- The lightning storm that passed across the south end of the Forest, along a line from Lookout Mountain to the Chain of Lakes area, generated dozens of lightning strikes. But – the storm also delivered ½ inch or more of rain along most of its path. Forest Lookouts and Air Patrol are monitoring the area to quickly locate any holdover starts that may show up.

So far, lookouts have located one new start on the Bitterroot National Forest. Called the Saddle Gulch fire, it is located 5 miles northwest of Nez Perce Pass on the West Fork Ranger District. Although this fire is located in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, due to its proximity to the Wilderness boundary and fuel and weather conditions, the decision has been made to suppress this fire rather than allow it to burn as a Wildland Fire Use Fire. Firefighters are conducting initial size up of the fire to determine the best suppression tactics.

The new smoke that showed up late this afternoon west of Hamilton is the Bridge Fire on the Clearwater National Forest. It is located about 3.5 miles north of Elk Summit and 9 miles west of the MT-ID state line in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. It grew quickly to 100+ acres, and the Clearwater NF is in the process of evacuating backcountry users in the area.

Otherwise, here's a rundown of where things stand on the Bitterroot National Forest. Fires that have been controlled and are now in Patrol Status:

- High Martin, Sula Ranger District. Started 7/21; ½ acre;

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- Rock Creek 34 west of Lake Como on Darby Ranger District. Started 7/20; 3 acres in size.
- Mountain House, East of Hamilton on Darby Ranger District. 4.7 acres in size.
- Half Pete fire in Deep Creek drainage on West Fork Ranger District. 3 acres.
- Harlan Gulch on Darby Ranger District. 47.5 acres.
- Michael Fire on Darby Ranger District. 99.7 acres in size.

In addition, the eleven Wildland Fire Use (WFU's) fires, located in the Frank Church – River of No Return, Anaconda-Pintlar and Selway Bitterroot Wilderness Areas, continue to be monitored by air patrol. An infra-red flight was flown last night and data from that flight, expected to be available on Thursday, will enable us to update acreage figures and the status of these fires. These WFU's include:

- El Capitan WFU. 25-30 acres in size
- Elkhorn Ridge WFU. 7 acres
- Snake Creek WFU – minimal fire spread or activity
- Saddle Gulch WFU in Gabe Creek – 1/10 acre with little fire activity
- Kurtz WFU – minimal fire spread or activity
- Harrington Mountain WFU – 100 acres with active burning
- Hay Stack Creek WFU – 1/10 acre; no fire activity in recent days
- Harrington Ridge WFU – 200 acres in size with active burning.
- Swet Cabin WFU – minimal fire spread or activity.
- Magruder Mountain #1 WFU – 1 ½ acre in size; no visible smoke since 7/19
- Magruder Mountain #2 WFU – 3 ½ acres with minimal recent activity.

Current information regarding these fires and any new starts can be found at the Bitterroot National Forest's Dispatcher's website, <http://63.196.254.151/WildWeb/WCMT-BRC.htm> .

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